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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 003486

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TAGS: PGOV PINR PREL MX
SUBJECT: FINAL POLLS GIVE NARROW LEAD TO LOPEZ OBRADOR

REF: MEXICO 3325

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR ALAN D. MELTZER, REA
SONS: 1.4(B/D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Over the last several days, Mexican
polling firms have released the results of the final round of
polls to be published before the July 2 election. The five
most influential polls in Mexico all give a narrow lead of
between two and four percent to the Party of the Democratic
Revolution's (PRD) Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), over
the National Action Party's (PAN) Felipe Calderon. AMLO's
lead over Calderon is generally within the polls' margin of
error. Roberto Madrazo of the long-governing Institutional
Revolutionary Party (PRI) consistently polls in third place,
trailing Calderon by anywhere between one and nine percent.
Polling of likely congressional results suggests that the
Congress will be relatively evenly divided between the three
major parties and that the PRI faces a significant
possibility of losing its first place position, and could
even drop to third place, particularly in the Chamber of
Deputies. At a panel discussion today among some of Mexico's
leading polling experts, most concurred that AMLO's lead over
Calderon was too narrow to be able to predict the outcome of
the election and that numerous factors could influence the
outcome. End summary.

AMLO Enjoys the Edge in What Remains a "Technical Tie"
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¶2. (C) As Mexican electoral law does not permit polls to be
published after June 23, major polling firms have released
the results of their final pre-election firms over the last
few days. The five most influential Mexican polls all give a
slight advantage to AMLO, albeit his margin is generally
within the margin of error of each poll. According to the
average of the five polls, AMLO leads Calderon by 36% to
32.8%, with a third place Roberto Madrazo polling 26.9%.
Individually, the polls show the following results:
Parametria/Excelsior: AMLO 36.5%, Calderon 32.5%, Madrazo
27%; Reforma: AMLO 36%; Calderon 34%, Madrazo 25%; Mitofsky:
AMLO 36%, Calderon 33%, and Madrazo 27%; Maria de las
Heras/Milenio: AMLO 35.4%, Calderon 30.5%, and Madrazo 29.6%;
and Universal: AMLO 36%, Calderon 34%, and Madrazo 26%. We
note that the Parametria poll -- which shows one of the
largest leads for AMLO -- was released four days earlier than
the Reforma and Universal polls and therefore may not reflect
the very latest trends. It is also worth noting that the
Milenio poll has consistently been the most favorable to
Roberto Madrazo and the least favorable to Felipe Calderon.
The polltaker, Maria de las Heras, has close personal ties to
the PRI and we therefore tend to view her results with some
skepticism (reftel).

¶3. (SBU) Poll results for congressional races were somewhat
less consistent than those for the presidential race. None

of the polls showed one party winning an absolute majority in
either chamber of Congress and most predicted that the
chambers would be divided into relatively equal thirds. The
average poll results for the Chamber of Deputies predicts
that the PAN will win 33% of the vote, the PRI 32% and the
PRD 31%. The Senate is divided equally narrowly: the PRI is
predicted to win 33%, the PAN 33% and the PRD 30%.

The Mexican Electorate Can be Volatile

¶4. (SBU) On June 23, the Colegio de Mexico sponsored a panel
discussion in which many of Mexico's leading pollsters
(including those responsible for the Reforma, Milenio and
Mitofsky polls) as well as political analysts, discussed the
latest opinion trends. The majority of the speakers
concurred that while AMLO enjoyed a lead of approximately two
points, the race was too close to call. As Mitofsky's Roy
Campos phrased it, AMLO's margin was not large enough "to
enable the polls to reliably pick the winner." Several
pointed out that at this point in the 2000 campaign, the
average of all polls showed the PRI with a 2.7% lead over the
PAN. While that margin narrowed in subsequent, pre-election
(but unpublished) tracking polls, the PAN never managed to
take the lead before Election Day. Nevertheless, on Election
Day 2000, PAN candidate Vicente Fox defeated his PRI opponent
by a margin of over 6%.

¶5. (SBU) The speakers singled out a number of other factors
that could influence the outcome. At least one noted that
AMLO's strongest support was among the poor and uneducated,
populations that were least likely to vote. Accordingly, a
low participation rate would tend to favor the PAN and PRI,
and the parties' get-out-the-vote operations could prove

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decisive on Election Day. Undecided voters appear to favor
AMLO, while those "voting strategically" -- i.e., would-be
PRI voters who decide to vote for their second choice
candidate due to Madrazo's reduced chances -- tend to
narrowly favor Calderon. Those voting for change -- the
sentiment that prevailed on Election Day 2000 -- would be
expected to break for AMLO. Several noted that media
advertising had played a major role in the campaign to date,
and in a race this close, the candidates' final media drive
could influence the outcome.
Comment: Down to the Wire

¶6. (C) While AMLO's lead over Calderon is within the polls'
margin of error, one cannot ignore the fact that all five
major polls reflect this lead. On the other hand,
notwithstanding AMLO's slight advantage, the Mexican
electorate -- only recently liberated from a one party system
-- has proven itself volatile in the past, and questions
remain about AMLO's ability to get many of his supporters to
the polls. Under these circumstances, we believe the race
truly remains too close to call. Finally, it is worth
emphasizing that if the Congress turns out to be as narrowly
divided as the latest polls predict, it would represent a
significant consolidation of multiparty democracy in
Mexico...and possibly a harbinger of legislative gridlock to
come.

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